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ABSTRACT

Legislation and educational initiatives aimed at reforming Ohio's career-technical education system include establishing higher academic expectations for all students, blending academic and technical content, preparing students for postsecondary education and careers, and including all students. This paper looks at how educators, administrators, and service providers can accomplish the following equity-related items: (1) infuse equity while implementing the initiatives and legislation; (2) collaborate effectively with school staff and community service providers to enhance equity; (3) access financial resources that are available to address equity issues; and (4) assess results regarding equity. Two charts illustrate equity considerations within current federal legislation and equity considerations within Ohio career-technical education initiatives. Eight questions to consider in assessing equity issues when implementing reform initiatives are included. (KC)

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Equity Issues

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Infusing Equity Across School Reform Initiatives

Many educational reform efforts across the United States are in progress. Schools are shifting from preparing *some students for entry level jobs and some students for college* to preparing *all students for careers and further education*. Current legislation and many of the initiatives in Ohio's career-technical education system support these reform efforts through new delivery options, funding strategies, and legislative priorities. Equity considerations are critical to these reform efforts. For instance, career pathways, Tech Prep, High Schools That Work (HSTW), and Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies (ITACs) expand opportunities for *all* students in preparation for postsecondary education and careers. Current legislation directs education and social service agencies to focus on training adults and youth for careers, including nontraditional ones that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

When comparing these initiatives and legislation (See Charts 1 and 2), several commonalties arise. They include:

Establishing higher academic expectations for all students. More students participate in college-preparatory-level academic courses taught to higher standards. The whole school supports high expectations and actively engages students in higher-level learning experiences.

Blending academic and technical content. The essential content of college preparatory mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies courses are integrated with challenging vocational and technical studies. Academic and technical teachers collaborate to develop project-based activities.

Preparing students for postsecondary education and careers. Students are not prepared for college *or* work, but have the opportunity to pursue postsecondary education *and* high-tech, high-wage careers.

Including all students. All students are held to high academic standards. No tracking exists based on academic ability, socioeconomic status, gender, or race. Students are encouraged to participate in the initiatives and programs that match their interests and abilities.

Equity is embedded in each of these commonalities. Higher academic expectations attempt to eliminate traditional stereotypes such as "girls can't do math" or "boys can't write." Blending academic and technical content with contextual teaching allows students to deepen their understanding of the future workplace and need for academic skills. Preparing students for postsecondary education and careers encourages students to explore many career options in a career cluster area, not just those careers traditionally acceptable for their gender. Inclusion of all students promotes equity—in considering career choices, access to programs, teaching methodology, use of equipment and resources, and program delivery systems.

Addressing equity issues is the responsibility of all educators, administrators, and service providers. The purpose of this paper is to look at how these professionals can: 1) infuse equity while implementing the initiatives and legislation; 2) effectively collaborate with school staff and community service providers to enhance equity; 3) access financial resources that are available to address equity issues; and 4) assess results regarding equity.

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Infusing Equity while Implementing Reform Initiatives and Legislation

Although career pathways, Tech Prep, and High Schools That Work (HSTW) have unique characteristics, there are some equity themes that intersect each initiative. The charts, "Equity Considerations within Current Federal Legislation" and "Equity Considerations within Ohio Career-Technical Education Initiatives," show how equity is infused through the legislation and initiatives. All three initiatives focus on preparing students for both college and careers. Historically, students may have been tracked by ability level into college prep, vocational, and general education tracks. These reform initiatives challenge schools to change curriculum and program design models so that all students participate in rigorous academics and career-focused education. Therefore, students who were previously not considered "college material" will be prepared for post-secondary education, and students who were considered college-prep will be able to connect their academic studies to a career context. To accomplish this a school may eliminate separate vocational and college-prep courses in favor of organizing the high school curriculum by career cluster. Then instead of choosing a vocational program or a college-prep program, students would enroll in college-prep courses taught within the context of a cluster area, such as health careers. Consequently, equity issues are infused into the reform effort since all students are given the opportunity to prepare for college and careers.

Another equity issue that is addressed across the reform initiatives is career exploration and development. In order for students to make informed decisions about a career major or cluster area, students need multiple opportunities to explore and learn about numerous careers. Some schools, such as Canton City Schools, have adopted a freshmen academy model where all students explore careers within each of the clusters during the year. Students spend several weeks exploring entry-, technical-, and professional-level careers, including nontraditional career options, within each cluster. This approach to career exploration is more thorough than allowing students to tour a career center and pick two or three areas of interest. It ensures that all students are introduced to all cluster areas and that students explore both traditional and nontraditional options. Whether a district is adopting HSTW, career pathways, or Tech Prep (or all three of these initiatives), comprehensive career development is essential.

In addition, reform initiatives focus on broadening career opportunities for students and not continuing to reinforce traditional stereotypes of certain career areas when implementing the initiatives. For example, a business and management academy should attract a variety of students, both male and female, who aspire to technical- and professional-level careers within that cluster. If, however, the business and management academy were simply a re-named version of a secretarial program, the academy would risk losing male students and alienating those students who wish to enter professional-level careers in business and management. Therefore, when implementing any new program model, educators need to ensure that the program is designed for a wide variety of students, not just a select few.

Finally, equity needs to be addressed through the curriculum in every initiative or vocational program. Equity issues such as communication, diversity, legal responsibilities, harassment, and balancing work and family are key topics. The Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies (ITACs) are a curriculum resource that infuse equity throughout the competencies. They can be used as part of any reform initiative or program. Figure 1 describes the core ITACs, listing all that focus on equity issues. Educators are not to teach these Core ITACs in an isolated class on employability skills, but are to infuse them throughout all content and courses. To help teach the Core ITAC competencies, educators can use the Gender Equity Modules (GEMS) obtained through the Vocational Instructional Materials Lab.

Effectively Implement Collaborations

Most of the reform initiatives and legislation require collaboration within the school and with other community agencies and employers. In Ohio, partnership is required between Perkins and TANF for WIA to be implemented. The local workforce policy board MUST include Perkins and TANF representatives in order to receive WIA dollars.

Many times the same professionals may participate on more than one board, advisory committee, task force, etc. Professionals need to monitor the tendency to work in isolation with one or more initiatives or legislation without seeing their commonalities.

Collaboration within a team is essential for communication to be consistent, for efforts to not be duplicated, and for mutually agreed-upon outcomes to be achieved. When collaboration or a common vision does not exist among team members, the following may happen:

- Courses continue to be segregated by gender, ethnicity, special needs, etc.
- Student achievement of higher academic standards is limited.
- Students continue to be tracked for college or work and do not consider a wide array of options in preparing for their future.

(continued)

CHART 1. EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN CURRENT FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Legislation	Carl D. Perkins Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1998	Workforce Investment Act of 1998	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996
Definition	The legislation is designed to improve vocational and technical education by strengthening academics, broadening vocational opportunities for students, sending more money to the local level, and increasing flexibility for state and local program needs.	The legislation is designed to improve the delivery and accountability of the workforce preparation and employment system.	The national welfare reform legislation and block grants move clients off welfare and into economic self-sufficiency.
Intended Audience	Secondary and adult students	Adults, dislocated workers, and youth needing employment and/or job retention skills due to unemployment, lack of employable skills, and/or low socioeconomic status	Needy families with children below poverty level
Equity Focus	School districts face an increased emphasis on serving single parents (sp) and displaced homemakers (dh) and individuals entering nontraditional employment and training (nts). Districts must identify and adopt strategies to overcome barriers to sp/dh/nts accessing and succeeding in programs. Specific actions for recruitment, retention, and completion must be documented.	The "One-Stop" system allows for more equitable access to and training of clients. In addition, training and service providers assess clients according to skills and abilities as they relate to local labor market needs rather than gender, race, education level, work history, or socioeconomic status. Targeted populations include displaced homemakers, single parents, and female workers.	Needy families are to become self-sufficient using necessary assistance. Monies for short-term training and support services such as childcare and transportation are available to help make the transition from cash assistance to economic self-sufficiency through employment.
Equity Concerns	The 1998 Perkins legislation eliminates the 10% set-aside for gender equity in the 1990 Perkins Act. Current funds will not cover program costs. Collaboration with other agencies in serving sp/dh/nts is necessary. Dealing with equity issues becomes the responsibility of all and may not be addressed unless there is a district-wide commitment to equity.	The increased emphasis on training to secure economic self-sufficiency is an opportunity for providers to encourage clients to select careers based on their potential for living wages and not on gender, race, or socioeconomic stereotypes. Female clients need to explore many career options, especially nontraditional ones, and then choose high-wage careers. Recruitment and retention of females in nontraditional occupations is critical.	Even though clients are placed in jobs, they typically do not earn high wages that enable them to achieve and maintain economic self-sufficiency. If there is an increased emphasis on high-wage training programs, especially nontraditional training, clients could then select jobs based on their skills and interests as well as potential for living wages.

CHART 2. EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN OHIO CAREER-TECHNICAL EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Initiative	Career Pathways	Tech Prep	High Schools That Work (HSTW)
Definition	Career pathways is a reform strategy for schools to organize courses and curriculum so *all* students can participate in career-focused education. It includes a series of academic, technological, and occupational coursework and other educational experiences leading to a career major. It is implemented through a variety of delivery options, including career academies, magnet schools, career clusters, foundation and capstone courses, and curriculum integration. The general academic track is eliminated. It prepares students for both college and careers.	Tech Prep is a competency-based education and technical-occupational program that includes a common core of advanced proficiencies in mathematics, science, communication, and technologies designed to lead to an associate degree or a bachelor's degree in specific career fields.	High Schools That Work (HSTW) is a high school reform framework of goals, key practices, and key conditions for accelerating learning and setting higher standards to improve academic and vocational-technical achievement. The general academic track is to be eliminated. It prepares students for both college and careers.
Intended Audience	Students in grades 9-12	Students in grades 11-14	Students in grades 9-12, particularly students in the academic middle
Equity Focus	Students have opportunities to explore a range of options within entire career clusters and therefore eliminate the issue of low-wage vs. high-wage vocational programs. They can also explore traditional and nontraditional options within a pathway, experiencing heterogeneous work groups rather than same-sex classes. Pathways must be inclusive and be able to serve many groups, including all academic tracks (gifted as well as special needs students), both genders, and diverse cultures.	Tech Prep expands opportunities for *all* students. It emphasizes advanced math, science, and technology skills, translating into high-wage, high-tech careers. The Ohio plan for Tech Prep includes a goal to increase the number of students from underrepresented populations (including gender) to 25% of the total enrollment.	Academic tracking is to be eliminated for all students. All students complete an upgraded academic core taught to college preparatory standards. In addition, students take courses in a broad technical field of study. Using the Individual Career Plan (ICP), the advisor/advisee career-counseling component focuses on students' interests and skills rather than gender, race, or socioeconomic status in identifying educational and career goals.

Equity Considerations within Ohio Career-Technical Education Initiatives *(continued)*

Initiative	Career Pathways	Tech Prep	High Schools That Work (HSTW)
Equity Concerns	High schools implementing career pathways may organize academic and technical courses by career clusters. For high school students to make wise decisions in choosing their career cluster area, K-9 students must have effective, thorough career development. Educators and guidance counselors must present career cluster areas in a way that equitably showcases possible pathways and future entry, technical, and professional careers with each career cluster area.	Because females historically have not taken advanced math, science, and technology courses, female students may not view Tech Prep as a viable option. Males may not see the Tech Prep Allied Health program as an option because many health careers are traditionally stereotyped for females. Enrollment in Tech Prep is often segregated by gender based on traditional career choices. Marketing is critical for students to envision all career options. Recruitment and retention of nontraditional students in Tech Prep is necessary. Attentiveness to equity will increase the likelihood of meeting enrollment goals.	Current research shows that females tend to not enroll in advanced math, science, and technology courses and achieve at lower levels than males in those courses. Males tend to not enroll in advanced language arts courses and achieve at lower levels than females in those courses. *All* students need to be encouraged to enroll in advanced courses and need to receive appropriate support in succeeding in those courses. Historically, some students in schools would select careers and take courses to help prepare them for that career. In HSTW, *all* students declare career majors. Therefore, career development must be addressed in grades K-8 so students understand the multitude of career choices available to them and they do not declare career majors based on traditional stereotypes, family legacy, peer pressure, etc.

Figure 1. Core ITACs Focusing on Equity Issues

ITACs are a curriculum resource comprised of a system of common academic, technical, and employability competencies integrated across subject-matter areas for students in grades K-12 and beyond. They build on and expand the Occupational Competency Analysis Profile (OCAP) system. Competencies are linked to Ohio Competency-Based Education Models and Ohio Proficiency Test Learning Outcomes. The core competencies represent what all students should know and be able to do in the world of work. Teachers need to work together to ensure their curricula addresses core ITACs and, when appropriate, the cluster and specialization competencies. Core ITACs competencies that specifically address equity issues are listed below.

Communicating Effectively

2.2.5 In oral communication, demonstrate sensitivity to cultural diversity (e.g., accepted variations in distances between speakers, use of eye contact, meaning of gestures; bias-free language)
2.3.5 In written communication, demonstrate sensitivity to cultural diversity
2.11.2 Relate to people of different ages, abilities, genders, cultures, and behavior styles

Applying Technology

3.1.2 Analyze the interplay of technology with social issues, gender issues, ethics, law, government

Working Responsibly

4.2.1 Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural, gender, and generational differences (in communication, interpersonal skills, and learning preferences)
4.3.6 Demonstrate awareness of legal responsibilities (e.g., copyright laws, harassment, equity)
4.6.1 Recognize the differences associated with diversity and the implications of those differences
4.6.2 Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills in working with others of different backgrounds
4.6.3 Express feelings, actions, and ideas respectfully
4.6.4 Identify appropriate strategies and solutions for dealing with cultural conflicts and differences
4.6.5 Demonstrate respect for diverse international business practices and etiquette

Planning and Managing a Career

5.2.1 Identify career options, including self-employment and nontraditional careers
5.2.4 Select careers that best match interests and aptitudes
5.2.7 Identify potential conflicts between interest/aptitudes and career choices
5.2.8 Identify how career choices influence family, personal life, and lifestyle
5.3.5 Identify challenges that may interfere with individual career plan (e.g., gender issues, misinformation, expectations of others, and conditions of labor market)

Managing Resources

6.7.1 Explore the meaning of work and the meaning of family
6.7.2 Analyze how work life is affected by families and how families are affected by work life
6.7.3 Implement strategies for balancing work and family roles

Collaborations *(continued)*

- Courses and curriculum change relatively little, becoming more obsolete as technology increases and new careers evolve in the world of work.

Effectively using collaborations is critical to the success of the initiatives and legislation. Schools implementing the various initiatives indicate that when they keep "all students" in the forefront of their discussions they most often achieve the best implementation plan reaching the most students in the best way possible. That takes a collaborative effort by all team members.

Use Available Financial Resources

For the past 10 years, equity has been specifically addressed through the use of the 10% set-aside in the Perkins Act. Monies have been available to states and local school districts. Specific grants for equity initiatives and programs are no longer available from the state but the monies from the former 10% set-aside are now included in the Perkins allocation at the VEPD level.

Monies are also tied to the Workforce Investment Act and TANF. It is up to the local agencies as to how the funds are to be used. Funding for support services, training programs, and equity initiatives may be available through these sources.

Tech Prep Expansion grants are another potential resource for addressing equity. These grants focus on increasing the number of Tech Prep programs available to students and on increasing the number of students, especially underrepresented populations, enrolled in these programs. Equity initiatives can be addressed through the implementation of these grants since educators will need to look beyond students traditionally served in Tech Prep programs in order to increase enrollment.

All of these financial resources are available throughout Ohio. Contacts for these resources are given in Figure 2.

Administrators, educators, and collaborations can also pool resources to infuse equity through the initiatives and programs. One grant may assist with adult training for nontraditional jobs and may include monies for recruitment and retention. Some of the materials and strategies developed through grant money for the adult training may be incorporated into recruitment strategies for nontraditional students. Administrators and educators need to consider how resources and materials may be used in more than one initiative or program. This will take collaboration among various school and agency personnel, but will ultimately serve more adult and secondary students with less duplication of effort and resources.

In many ways, equity is a philosophy that doesn't require funding initiatives or new programs. It's more of a daily commitment to look at how programs, school environment, teaching methodology, educational materials, etc. serve all students, regardless of gender, race, socioeconomic status, and other traditional parameters. It's providing quality teaching and delivery systems that invite all students to learn to their best ability and to prepare them for a productive future career. It's being constantly creative and collaborative as a staff, group of professionals, and employers to infuse equity issues in all that is said and done. Yes, it's great to have money available to implement programs, purchase resources and equipment, and develop creative snazzy strategies to recruit and retain nontraditional students. However, most progress made in including all students in career-technical education is the individual commitment and attitude of each administrator, educator, agency staff member, and employer to serve all students according to their unique talents and abilities.

Sharon Mastronanni, Vocational Director, EHOVE Career Center

Figure 2. Ohio Department of Education Staff Contacts for School Reform Initiatives and Legislation

Career Pathways: Heather Boggs, Consultant; Sheila Thompson, Consultant, 614-466-5910
High Schools That Work: Charlotte Coomer, Assistant Director; Pathways Initiatives, 614-466-3430; Connie Blair, Consultant, 614-466-2562
Perkins Legislation: Larry Daniels, Assistant Director, Administrative Field Services, 614-466-4835
Tech Prep: Karen Jesko, Consultant; Julie Novel, Consultant, 614-466-5910
Welfare Reform: Carolyn Gasiorek, Consultant, 614-466-2562
Workforce Investment Act: Kristen Cox, Assistant Director, Job Training and Partnership Services; Cyrena Donahue, Consultant; Steve Shaw, Consultant, 614-466-3900

Assess Results

How collaborations work together will largely determine the success of including *all* students and the other common components. The questions in Figure 3 on the next page help assess to what extent a program and/or initiative includes *all* students and if collaborations are effective in that goal. Administrators, educators, agency staff members, and employers can use these questions as they plan, implement, and evaluate results of their efforts toward equity. They can then set goals to improve weaknesses and continue enhancing strengths.

Move Forward

Equity is part of career-technical education. By not infusing equity in programs, initiatives, collaborations, and even one-on-one interaction with each student, students are not effectively served, are not challenged to reach their potential, and are often stereotyped into careers that may not best use their talents, skills, and abilities. When administrators and educators proactively address equity issues and commit to serving *all* students according to their interests and abilities, they increase the quality of the nation's future workforce, the economic self-sufficiency of future families, and the personal satisfaction and quality of life for each individual.

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Figure 3. Questions to Consider in Assessing Equity Issues When Implementing Reform Initiatives

- To what extent are course and program enrollments in a specific program representative of both genders, various ethnic groups, and differing abilities?
- What is the percentage of nontraditional students enrolled and retained?
- To what extent are instructional strategies, learning environments, and support systems valuable for all students regardless of their individual strengths or challenges?
- In what ways have we addressed and infused equity throughout the initiatives in a comprehensive and connected manner?
- How effectively are collaborations with various community agencies, employers, etc. infusing equity issues (such as including all students, creating safe and welcoming environments for all participants, using gender-fair materials and resources) into their programs and services?
- For career centers, how effective are collaborations among associate schools and postsecondary institutions in incorporating common components of the reform initiatives and legislation in the delivery of programs and services?
- In what ways do professional development activities address equity in the context of school reform?
- What are our equity concerns as we enter the 21st century and address the needs of the changing workforce? How are we addressing them through initiatives, collaborations, curriculum, and teaching methodology?

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